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# **European enlargement and new frontiers of Central and Eastern Europe**

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## European enlargement and new frontiers of Central and Eastern Europe<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract.** *The borders of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) today are the result of a complex process conducted decades after the fall of communist regimes in this part of Europe. With the opening towards the west, with the change of political and economic regimes came the implementation of democratic reforms of CEE societies and this led to the beginning of a complex integration process. The latter is undoubtedly associated with profound changes in the form and role of borders between states and the new Western partners. The old barriers open, the borders become increasingly soft. Old movement restrictions are removed. The main idea of the integration process is not to settle barriers, but to attenuate them. From this perspective, internal borders become more and more inclusive and less visible. Security and border traffic control are transferred to external borders that become more and more exclusive, more restrictive if we respect the logic above. Such a theory is valid up to a point. Internal borders do not simply become more open, more inclusive; there is an integration process taking place in steps. The EU external border greatly expanded eastward, and in this context the old borders have become simple internal borders. Associated to an integration process, we find a process of dilution to the disappearance of internal borders with the Schengen space integration (old borders remain expressions of sovereignty, the national limits no longer serve to separate people, goods and capital).*

**Keywords:** *Europa, frontiers, enlargement, European Union, NATO, Euro, Shengen, identity, culture, Europeanism, good neighbourhood, crossborder cooperation*

### Introduction

European enlargement into Eastern Europe, the identity of the European space, in particular of the European Union, is a complex issue that involves many controversies in the debate. The starting point in this study is the analysis of the European integration process of Central and Eastern Europe and the identity of this area in relation to the European East-West dichotomy through its borders. A debate on the European Union's external borders and proximity space can be made in terms of a comprehensive

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approach to capture both the official views of the organization and that of the various concepts contained in the specialised literature.

One of the first *hypothesis* of this analysis is that the typology and the organization of border space reflect the image and identity of the European Union, namely the various stages of the integrating process, of expansion towards the former communist space of the Western European model of community organization. Another hypothesis stems from the close relationship between the European enlargement and the opening (dilution!) of the former fortress-type borders of the old communist era. The former external borders of the EU acquire by enlargement, in addition to limit the role of national systems of jurisprudence, a more symbolic value. The new frontier is rather a space contact than one of separation.

Since the beginning of our research it is required to specify that the debate leaves room for at least two types of border spaces considered as external: the first results from the geographical boundaries of the European Union and the second from the territorial expansion of the Agreement for the Implementation of the System Schengen<sup>2</sup>. To these two we add the expansion of the NATO security space, and the configuration of the euro area as a distinct economic and monetary space within the EU. In terms of this approach, the perspective of the external border debate is driven by clear legal norms<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, the Community law on the frontier is given by: "all legal norms adopted by members of a community of states on access, stay of any other citizens of another State (whether a member of the Community or not), on crossing internal or external borders by persons, vehicles, and goods and joint regulations on border management, both internal and external"<sup>4</sup>.

From the EU perspective, the external border of the European Union represents the geographical limits set by Community agreements and treaties. From the perspective of the Schengen Agreement, the external borders are defined as "land and maritime borders, as well as airports and

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<sup>2</sup> Ioan Horga, Mircea Brie, *Europe between Exclusive Borders and Inclusive Frontiers*, in *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Series Europaea, Cluj-Napoca*, 2010, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> Mircea Brie, Ioan Horga, *The European Union External Border. An Epistemological Approach*, in *Revista Română de Geografie Politică*, 2009, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Vasile M. Ciocan, *Bună vecinătate și regimuri frontaliere din perspectivă europeană*, Oradea, Cogito Publishing House, 2002, p. 88.

sea ports of the Contracting Parties, if there are not internal borders”<sup>5</sup>. “Notwithstanding the definition of internal borders,... airports are considered as external borders for internal flights”<sup>6</sup>. Crossing these borders can be made in principle “only at border crossing points and according to their opening hours”<sup>7</sup>. Moreover, the new European treaties stress and regulate the principles of individual freedoms, including the free movement of people which is paid particular attention. The final provisions of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union, governed by the Lisbon reform of the old “European constitution”, surprise, despite the repeal of Article 67 of the old treaty text<sup>8</sup>, in a manner very clear that the Union shall constitute an area of freedom, security and justice<sup>9</sup>. To achieve these standards and also to guarantee the citizens’ rights, the EU set out their basic obligation to protect and control the external borders. However, all the protocols on external relations that make references to external borders provide “the need for Member States to ensure effective control of their external borders”<sup>10</sup>. Beyond the external borders of the European Union and the Member States (most of them being internal borders of the EU), we identify numerous other types of borders that are not directly the subject of this study. We refer here to cultural boundaries<sup>11</sup>, ethno - confessional, social, symbolic or ideological ones<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Convenția din 19/06/1990, publicată în Broșură nr. 0 din 19/06/1990 de aplicare a acordului de la Schengen din 14 iunie 1985 privind eliminarea graduală a controalelor la frontierele comune, Schengen, 19 iunie 1990, art. 1. Apud Ioan Horga, Mircea Brie, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, art. 4, para 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, art. 3, para 1.

<sup>8</sup> Text of *Tratatului de instituire a unei Constituții pentru Europa*, title V, chapter 1, surprises in articles 67-76 *Dispozițiile generale ale Spațiului de libertate, de securitate și de justiție*. See the text of the constitutional treaty in Marianne Dony, *Après la réforme de Lisbonne. Les nouveaux européens*, Bruxelles, 2008, p. 35-164.

<sup>9</sup> *Charte des droits fondamentaux de l'Union proclamée le 12 décembre 2007*, cap. II, art. 6-19. Apud Marianne Dony, *op. cit.*, pp. 270-277.

<sup>10</sup> Such a phrasing we can find also in *Protocolul asupra relațiilor ale statele membre cu privire la trecerea frontierelor exterioare* (1997), annexed to *Tratatului asupra funcționării Uniunii Europene*. Apud Marianne Dony, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

<sup>11</sup> See additionally Ioan Horga, Mircea Brie, *Europe: A Cultural Border, or a Geo-cultural Archipelago*, in *The Cultural frontiers of Europe, Eurolimes*, vol. 5, volume edited by Alina Stoica, Didier Francfort, Judit Csoba Simonne, Oradea, 2010, p. 155-169; Mircea Brie, Ioan Horga, *Le frontiere culturali europee: tra l'identità dello spazio europeo e le politiche comunitarie*, in Sorin Șipoș, Gabriel Moisa, Mircea Brie, Florin Sfrengeu, Ion Gumenăi (coord.), *The Historian's Atelier. Sources, Methods, Interpretations*, Romanian Academy, Centre of Transylvania Studies, Cluj-Napoca, 2012, p. 107-126; Alina Stoica, Mircea Brie, *The Cultural*

### European enlargement eastward and new perspectives on border

The borders of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) today are the result of a complex process conducted decades after the fall of communist regimes in this part of Europe. During the Cold War, Europe was divided into two by the two military blocs (NATO and the Warsaw Pact). On the line between the two military blocs emerged a *hard border, closed*, called the Iron Curtain. Subsequently, the European Union and NATO expansion eastward, through the integration of most of the former communist states of Europe, led to the disappearance of the *barrier* that had separated Europeans from Europeans.

**Map 1. The Iron Curtain (NATO vs. Warsaw Pact Nations)**



Source: Personal adaptation after

<http://mrparana.weebly.com/section-114.html>, viewed on 07.01.14

Begun with the unification of Germany, this process of European enlargement to the East has proved to be particularly important for shaping a new reality in the form and role of borders in Central and Eastern Europe

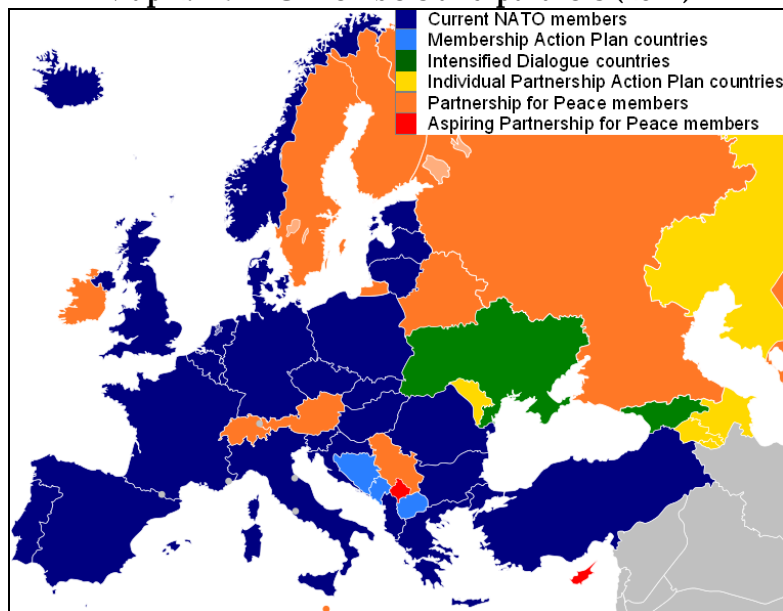
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*frontiers of Europe. Introductory Study*, in *The Cultural frontiers of Europe*, Eurolimes, vol. 9, volume edited by Alina Stoica, Didier Francfort, Judit Csoba Simonne, Oradea, 2010, p. 5-8; Mircea Brie, Ioan Horga, *Europa: frontiere culturale interne sau areal cultural unitar*, in *Moldoscopie*, nr. 3 (L), 2010, Chişinău, p. 123-143.

<sup>12</sup> Ioan Horga, Mircea Brie, *Europe between Exclusive Borders and Inclusive Frontiers...*, p. 73-82; Mircea Brie, Ioan Horga, *The European Union External Border...*, p. 22-29.

area. CEE states integrated into Euro-Atlantic structures that include three former Soviet republics (the Baltic States), and now have embraced this integrating idea following the only logical existing alternative of security (NATO) and the impulse of prosperity offered by the European Union. This need for very strong security in this part of the world was born from a psychosis, real or less real in the years after the fall of communism, of the continuous “siege” of Russia. In fact, this need for security has proven to be much stronger than other needs of states and of the population also because these countries first sought integration into NATO security.

**Map 2. NATO members and partners (2014)**



Source: Personal adaptation after [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NATO\\_affiliations\\_in\\_Europe.svg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:NATO_affiliations_in_Europe.svg), viewed on 07.01.14

NATO expansion eastward led to the shaping of a new security border significantly expanded eastward compared to the former Iron Curtain that demarcated the area of influence of NATO vs. the Warsaw Pact. Today in CEE, with few exceptions, the NATO space overlap exactly over the EU space. Moreover, we can not but note that from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea the external borders of the two organizations overlap exactly. These, associated to the last events of the year 2013 after the EU summit in Vilnius during which Ukraine refused the Association Agreement with the EU, allow us to distinguish a more or less clear east-

west European divide line that coincides largely with the new external border of the EU and NATO. It is possible however, that as a bonus for its pro-European orientation, Moldova be included in a space with a more *open* border. In the near future, by easing the visa policy to the point of even eliminating it, the EU could demonstrate to the Moldovan citizens its mutual interest in including the Republic of Moldova on the west side of the “new frontiers”.

**Map 3. European Union (2014)**



Sursă: BBC, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24367705>, viewed on 06.01.14

Returning to the form and character of the borders of the communist period, we mention that beyond the boundary the east-west separation line, the communist states led own policies of building their fortress-type borders. Countries like Romania thus become real prisons for their own citizens, crossing the border being clearly regulated and controlled by the Party apparatus through subordinate institutions of the state. With the opening towards the west, with the change of political and economic regimes came the implementation of democratic reforms of CEE societies and this led to the beginning of a complex integration process. The latter is undoubtedly associated with profound changes in the form and role of borders between states and the new Western partners. The old barriers open, the borders become increasingly *soft*. Old movement restrictions are removed. The main idea of the integration process is not to

settle barriers, but to attenuate them. From this perspective, internal borders become more and more *inclusive* and less visible. Security and border traffic control are transferred to external borders that become more and more *exclusive*, more restrictive if we respect the logic above<sup>13</sup>. Such a theory is valid up to a point. Internal borders do not simply become more open, more *inclusive*<sup>14</sup>; there is an integration process taking place in steps. On the other hand, we cannot consider as fully equal good and *inclusive/open*, or bad and *exclusive/close*. A simple example can confirm our hypothesis: in war areas, borders are relatively open to refugees<sup>15</sup>. However, we cannot conclude that we have an *inclusive* border “open just for pleasure” like European borders to which community integration tends as a model<sup>16</sup>. On both sides of the border new CBC forms have appeared<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Mircea Brie, *Europe from Exclusive Borders to Inclusive Frontiers: Case Study Romanian - Ukrainian Frontier*, in Ioan Horga, Istvan Suli-Zakar (coord.), *Cross-Border Partnership with Spacial Regard to the Hungarian-Romanian-Ukrainian Tripartite Border*, Oradea-Debrecen, 2010, p. 23-36.

<sup>14</sup> Gerard Delanty, *Border in Changing Europe: Dynamics of Openness and Closure*, in *Eurotimes*, vol. I, *Europe and Its Borders: Historical Perspective*, ed. Ioan Horga, Sorin Sipos, Oradea, Institute for Euroregional Studies, 2006, p. 51.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 50.

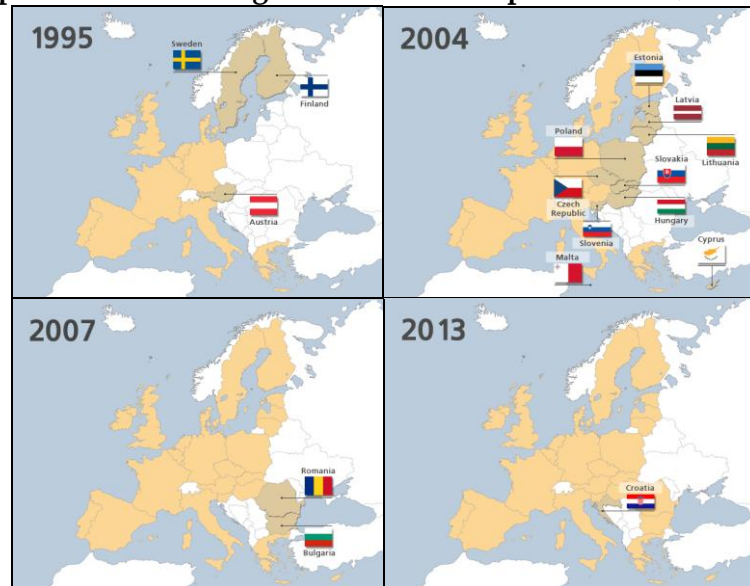
<sup>16</sup> Ioan Horga, Mircea Brie, *Europe between Exclusive Borders and Inclusive Frontiers*, ..., p. 63-86.

<sup>17</sup> See additionally Ioan Horga, Istvan Suli-Zakar (coord.), *Cross-Border Partnership with Spacial Regard to the Hungarian-Romanian-Ukrainian Tripartite Border*, Oradea-Debrecen, 2010; Mircea Brie, Istvan Polgar, Florentina Chirodea, *Cultural Identity, Diversity and European Integration. Introductory Study*, in Mircea Brie, Istvan Polgar, Florentina Chirodea (coord.), *European Union. Identity, Diversity and Integration*, supliment *Analele Universității din Oradea, Seria Relații Internaționale și Studii Europene*, Oradea, 2012, p. 7-20; Mircea Brie, *Ethnicity, Religion and Intercultural Dialogue in the European Border Space*, în Mircea Brie, Ioan Horga, Sorin Șipoș, *Ethnicity, Confession and Intercultural Dialogue at the European Union's East Border*, Editura Universității din Oradea/Editura Universității din Debrecen, supliment *Eurotimes*, Oradea/Debrecen, 2011, p. 11-18; Mircea Brie, *The European Neighborhood Policy, Mass-media and Cross-border Cooperation*, în *Analele Universității din Oradea, Seria Relații Internaționale și Studii Europene*, 2009, p. 81-86; Mircea Brie, Gabor Kosma (eds.), *From Smaller to Greater Europe: Border Identity Testimonies (Eurotimes)*, Oradea, 2006; Mircea Brie, *European Instruments of Cross-border cooperation. Case study: the Romanian-Ukrainian border*, în *Identités, citoyennetés et démocratie, 20 ans après*, sous la direction de Fabienne Maron, Grzegorz Pozarlik, Editions Bruylant, Bruxelles, 2010, p. 265-280; Ioan Horga, Mircea Brie, *La coopération interuniversitaire aux frontières extérieures de l'Union Européenne et la contribution à la politique européenne de voisinage*, in Ioan Horga, Grigore Silași, Istvan Suli-Zakar, Stanislaw Sagan (editors), *The European Parliament, Intercultural Dialogue and European Neighbourhood Policy*, Oradea, 2009, p. 232-251.



and they are likely to lead to disappearance of the old cleavages imposed by the old barriers.

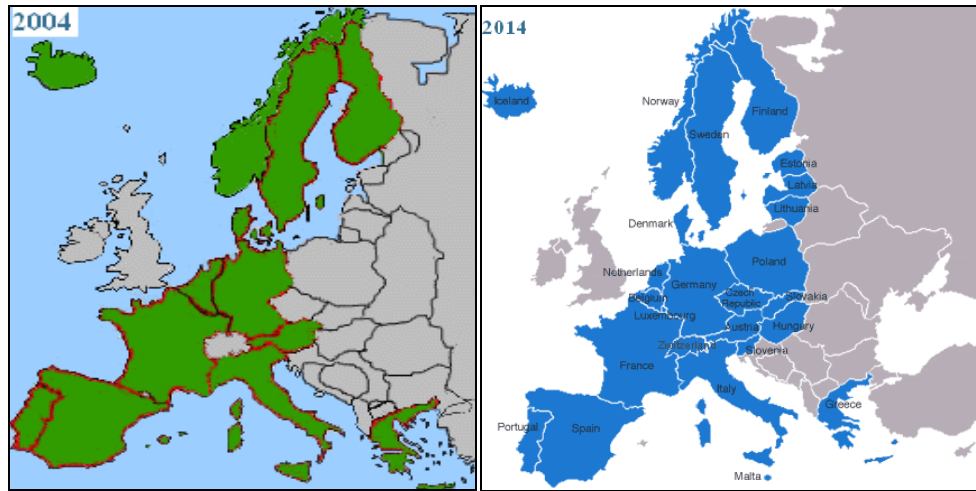
**Map 4. Eastward enlargement of the European Union (1995-2013)**



Source: BBC, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24367705>, viewed on 06.01.14

The EU external border greatly expanded eastward, and in this context the old borders have become simple internal borders. Associated to an integration process, we find a process of dilution to the disappearance of internal borders with the Schengen space integration (old borders remain expressions of sovereignty, the national limits no longer serve to separate people, goods and capital). Meanwhile, in association to the need to ensure a comprehensive security required by all EU space, the new external border becomes more restrictive, darker, more *hard*. The new reality therefore leads to hilarious situations : where there was no barrier boundaries (as is the case of the Baltic countries and Russia borders or Belarus - partners in the former USSR) now has become such a barrier. It is therefore possible to witness the shaping of a “new Iron Curtain” on the Baltic-Black Sea line overlapping the EU border, the NATO border and even the Schengen area border after the probable entering of Romania and Bulgaria of the Schengen space.

**Map 5. Shengen area 2004 vs. 2014**

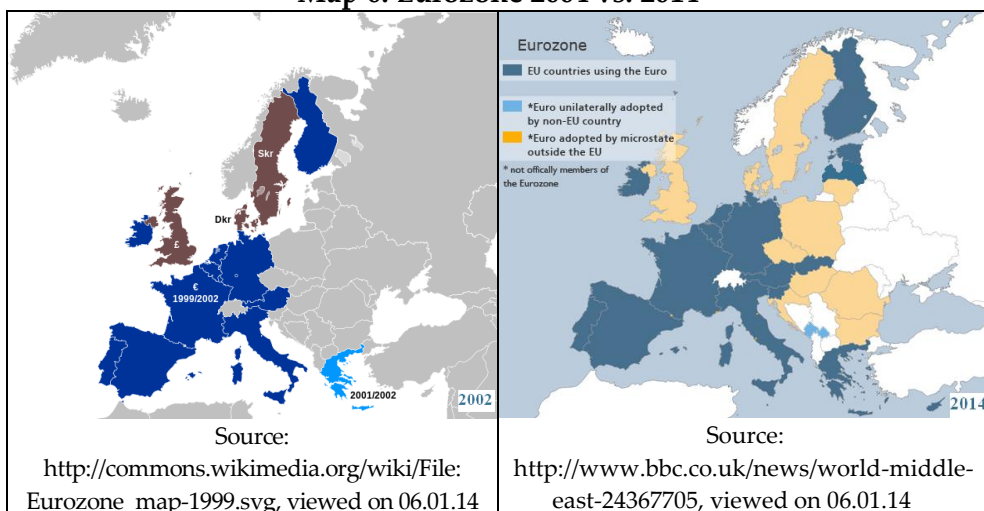


Source: <http://www.sussexineurope.org/eurotopics.htm>, viewed on 07.01.14

Source: <http://www.mediavisa.net/schengen-area.php>, viewed on 07.01.14

The analysis of the typology and the forms taken by the new frontiers in CEE becomes more complex when the debate makes room for other reference factors such as the euro, namely the shaping of the Eurozone monetary space not only distinct but also as a space with a strong economic and social identity. The distinct reporting to Eurozone relative to the rest of the EU space is increasingly present in the context of financial and economic crisis and the sovereign debt.

**Map 6. Eurozone 2004 vs. 2014**



Source:  
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eurozone\\_map-1999.svg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Eurozone_map-1999.svg), viewed on 06.01.14

Source:  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-24367705>, viewed on 06.01.14

In general, the concept of border is associated with the *hard* physical border, a concept related to the barrier that can be crossed provided certain special conditions and requirements (visa to enter that country is the best example of a restrictive requirement in the case of *hard* border). On the other hand, a state can have *hard* borders with a neighbouring country, while having *soft*, open borders with another neighbouring country<sup>18</sup>. A border can be both *hard* and *soft* at the same time. A state can eliminate visas for the citizens of a state while strengthening and reinforcing requirements in border control<sup>19</sup>. In the European Union, community institutions suggest that Member States should have *hard* external borders and *soft* internal borders. Visa, border police control on people and goods crossing the border are characteristic of *hard* border. Unlike this type of border, the *soft* border is characteristic of a more flexible transit system with no restrictions of circulation for goods and persons<sup>20</sup>. There are several steps to reach this type of border. They consist of the following: eliminating visa, reducing taxes for people and goods to zero, facilitating and strengthening human contacts on both sides of the border including cultural, educational, and training programmes, etc.

The enlargement of the European Union to the east, a process materialised by integrating several former communist countries, has led to changing the view on former community borders, to pushing the external frontiers to the border of these countries. The *hard* border that would provide protection to community citizens according to European institutions has thus become the concern of the newcomers. Nevertheless, within the community there are supporters of other European states: Poland constantly supports Ukraine, Romania supports the Republic of Moldova and Serbia, Hungary or Slovenia support Croatia and the examples can continue. Despite community restrictions, these states try to develop contacts and *soft* border constructions with their partners outside the community. These states' European integration has led to a certain isolation of Russia (associated with a *hard* type reaction), which was disturbed by the enlargement of the EU at the same time with the

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<sup>18</sup> Nanette Neuwahl, *What Borders for Which Europe?*, in Joan DeBardeleben (ed.), *Soft or Hard Borders? Managing the Divide in an Enlarged Europe*, Hampshire, Ashgate, 2005, p. 24.

<sup>19</sup> See Olga Potemkina, *A „Friendly Schengen Border“ and Illegal Migration: The Case of the EU and its Direct Neighbourhood*, in *Ibidem*, pp. 165-182.

<sup>20</sup> Joan DeBardeleben, *Introduction*, in *Ibidem*, p. 11.

enlargement of NATO. They are all part of a complex process generated by community mechanism, geopolitical realities and macroeconomic strategies. Thus, European enlargement determines the outline of new models of neighbourhood relations somehow different from the former relations between nation states<sup>21</sup>.

This complex perspectives in which the CEE borders could be seen and analysed are added up with the nuances offered by the Neighbourhood Policies, and by the special partnerships that EU and NATO countries in Eastern Europe have. the Union perspective on foreign relations has had in the past decade the *European Neighbourhood Policy* as a starting point and a support, the results of which were noted by the European Commission as being positive<sup>22</sup>. Along with this, the European Union's foreign policy was directly supported by two general instruments impacting on the external border : the pre-accession policy (in this category are included all potential candidates for membership) and the development policy for third countries<sup>23</sup>. In such a construction, both among members and in direct relation to the neighborhood at the external borders policies should focus on dialogue and constructive cooperation between all parties involved. A special role in this equation is gaining the promotion of education and human capital through various programs financed and supported by the European Union<sup>24</sup>.

Under the influence of the European neighbourhood policy, the concept of external border of the European Union tends to acquire new means of expression. On the one hand, we see a flexibility of contacts between the two sides of the border. Such a trend is enhanced by the means of cross-border cooperation through Euroregions and European instruments successfully implemented at the external border. On the other

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<sup>21</sup> Ioan Horga, Mircea Brie, *Europe between Exclusive Borders and Inclusive Frontiers...*, p. 72

<sup>22</sup> See *Communication de la Commission. Une politique européenne de voisinage vigoureuse*, Bruxelles, 05/12/2007, COM(2007) 744 final (in cont. *Communication de la Commission...*).

<sup>23</sup> Annabelle Hubeny-Berlsky, *Le financement de la PEV- la réponse proposée (1)*, in Laurent Beurdeley, Renaud de La Brosse, Fabienne Maron (coord.), *L'Union Européenne et ses espaces de proximité. Entre stratégie inclusive et partenariats removes: quell avenir pour le nouveau voisinage de l'Union?*, Bruxelles, Bruylant, 2007, p. 313.

<sup>24</sup> Ioan Horga, Mircea Brie, *Europe between Exclusive Borders and Inclusive Frontiers...*, p. 74; Ioan Horga, Mircea Brie, *Cooperarea inter-universitară la frontierele externe ale Uniunii Europene și contribuția la politica europeană de vecinătate*, in Sorin Șipoș, Mircea Brie, Florin Sfrengu, Ion Gumenăi (coord.), *Frontierele spațiului românesc în context European*, Editura Universității din Oradea/ Editura Cartdidact, Oradea/Chișinău, 2008, p. 440-459.

hand, the remarkable actions of the European Union through which they attempt to implement policies for regional cohesion at the current borders are, according to some analysts, the proof that the European Union is consolidating the current external borders, thus considering, at least for the moment, the option of slowing down the enlargement to the east without effectively closing the gates to this enlargement. We can conclude to pointing out that the implementation of the European neighbourhood policy leads to altering the perception of external border; moreover, the implementation of European instruments for cross-border cooperation tends to move current border to the outside by building a new symbolic one including a peripheral privileged area having the advantages of neighbourhood<sup>25</sup>.

### **Conclusions**

The analysis regarding the forms taken by the new frontiers of the CEE space after the EU eastward enlargement do confirm the hypotheses from which we started this study. On the one hand, the European borders, both internal and external, reflect the image of European identity and of realities be it, local, regional or whole (political, cultural and socio-economic). Analyzing borders we can conclude that they are the expression of our identity as a people, as a political or cultural system. As are our borders so are we, and so is the European Union. On the other hand, the European enlargement through the integration of former communist countries is associated with a process of dilution of the old frontiers, opening them so that new peoples have easier access to new partners.

Whether they have political, economic, social, cultural, mental, religious, or ethnic support, the borders are perceived as a space that separates humans and territories, but also cultures and identities. From another perspective, "the border is identified as an area of contact, as an overlap of social, economic, cultural features of two states". It is the contact of two cultural areas of identity, the space of a cultural mixture. From this vantage point, in such an area it is possible to build an identity that goes beyond the ethno-cultural barrier.

The main conclusion of an investigation on concepts of external border is that the European Union has an external border that can be both stiff and flexible depending on the realities and challenges of the moment,

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<sup>25</sup> Ioan Horga, Mircea Brie, *Europe between Exclusive Borders and Inclusive Frontiers...*, p. 74-75.

on tensions or social and economic, political and legal openness, as well as on the complex internal reality of the European Union Member States. Despite diluting to “extinction” of internal borders, in “Europe without borders” emerge and consolidate all kinds of different types of borders between people, borders which can take the various forms.

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